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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Polling peaceful as 70% vote in K'taka

Davangere records highest turnout & Raichur the least; 2 officials died on duty following heart attack

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Voting was held on Tuesday for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka, in 14 constituencies, with about 70 per cent turnout as Congress and BJP locked horns again on the electoral battleground in less than a fortnight.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the same 14 segments in the first phase had recorded a turnout of 68.43 per cent.

The state has a total of 28 Lok Sabha constituencies. The first phase of polling in the other 14 seats in most of the southern and coastal districts was held on 26 April.

"No violence was reported. The second phase of Lok Sabha polls in the State was peaceful," Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Meena told PTI.

Two government servants on Lok Sabha poll duty died in Karnataka following heart attacks, sources in the Election Commission.

The deceased are 48-year-old Govindappa Siddapura, headmaster of a government school, who died in Bagalkot district's Mudhol town on Monday. Assistant Agriculture Officer Anand Telang, 32, died at Kudumbal in Bidar.

Out of the 14 segments that went to polls today, the highest turnout of 76.23 per cent was recorded in Davangere and least 61.34 per cent in Raichur. Meanwhile, District In-charge Minister Priyank Kharge has accused BJP leaders of distributing money to the voters through the digital payment in Chittapur and Sedam assembly constituencies. In a post on X, he attached a list of 20 voters allegedly prepared by the BJP along with their phone numbers to make payment through the PhonePe. The phone numbers are erased in the list.

In Bagalkot's Bilagi, the names of 28 voters were found missing in the voters' list of ward no 2 of Nagarala village

The segments where elections were held are: Chikkodi, Belagvai, Bagalkot, Vijaypura, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Bidar, Koppal, Ballari, Haveri, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada, Davangere and Shivamogga.

Having scored a thumping victory in the Assembly elections, Congress appeared determined to put up a strong show in the Lok Sabha polls, while Karnataka is the most important state for the BJP in South India. *—Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2&3

Voters show their inked fingers in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras on Tuesday; Prime Minister Narendra Modi casted his vote in Ahmedabad; Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge voted in his home turf Kalaburagi ***PHOTO: PTI***

Nation's 93 seats witness 62% polling

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

A nearly 62 per cent voter turnout was recorded on Tuesday in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections in 93 constituencies spread over 11 states and Union Territories with stray incidents of violence in West Bengal.

Assam recorded the highest turnout at 75.53 per cent followed by Goa at 74.47 per cent. Maharashtra witnessed the lowest at 55.54 per cent

As many as 17.24 crore people, were eligible to vote.

A 45-year-old woman polling officer - Kaushika Babariya- deployed at a polling booth in Amreli district of Gujarat, also died of a heart attack.

In Gujarat, the Banaskantha district collector ordered an inquiry after Congress candidate Geniben Thakor alleged that electors were threatened and asked to vote for BJP by some youngsters posing as Central Reserve Police Force personnel at a polling station. Also netizens on social media flagged alleged poll code violation in Gandhinagar as BJP installed human-size cutouts of Lord Ram near booths. *—PTI*

VOTER TURNOUT IN KARNATAKA

Bagalkot	70.10%	70.7%
Belagavi	70.84%	67.84%
Ballari	69.74 %	69.76%
Bidar	63.55%	63%
Chikkodi	74.39%	75.62%
Davanagere	76.23%	73.19%
Dharwad	72.12%	70.29%
Haveri	72.59%	74.21%
Kalaburagi	61.73%	61.18%
Koppal	69.87%	68.56%
Raichur	61.34%	58.34%
Shivamogga	76.05%	76.58%
Uttara Kannada	73.52%	74.16%
Vijayapura	64.71%	61.89%

*Approximate Voter Turnout (till 10pm) 2024 2019

Cops beat us, didn't let us vote: Muslims in UP

AMINA AFAQ
BENGALURU, 7 MAY

- An altercation took place between Samajwadi Party candidate Zia-ur-Rehman and the District Superintendent of Police. He was pushed by police personnel after he raised objections to not being allowed to vote

In Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, police were accused of using force to allegedly stop Muslims from voting. In videos that went viral on social media, Muslim voters alleged that police snatched their voter slips and even tore their Voter's ID and Aadhaar cards. "We were just looking at the electoral list when they (police) charged at us and hit us with sticks," a man said.

In another video, cops chase a crowd of voters and even throw their batons at people. Women and children were also beaten up. "I do not know why they beat us. They also took away my voter's slip," said a youth who suffered injuries on his neck and chest.

In the same video, two women claimed that they were beaten too. "They've crossed all limits," she said.

Meanwhile, several Muslim women alleged they were turned away from the polling booth by the police. Local administration allegedly labelled their Aaadhar cards as fake. One of the women claimed that at least 50 females were stopped from voting.

We have been waiting since the morning. We want to vote. Why aren't they letting us? How are our Aadhaars fake?" asked a woman.

In another video, cops are seen standing in front of an elderly man who had collapsed on a road. People alleged the police had beaten the old man.

An altercation also took place between Samajwadi Party candidate Zia-ur-Rehman and the District Superintendent of Police. Zia-Ur-Rehman was pushed by police personnel after he raised objections to not being allowed to vote.

In another video, Anukriti Sharma, ASP of Sambhal, is seen telling the police that polling officials have the right to check voter cards. "It is not the job of the police. Let the voters go," she added.

Meanwhile, Sambhal police posted on its X account that 50 people were caught for trying to cast votes using fake IDs. They also said voting was peaceful. *—Salar News*

An elderly man lies on the road as cops watch in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh. Locals alleged he was beaten up by the police ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

EC directs 'X' to take down BJP's clip on Muslims

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Election Commission on Tuesday directed social media platform 'X' to "immediately" take down an animated video shared by Karnataka BJP on reservation for Muslims.

In a letter to the nodal officer of 'X', EC took exception to the non-compliance of the directive of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer to the social media platform for taking down the video.

The panel said the animated video shared by BJP was violative of the legal framework.

EC said the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka registered an FIR \and wrote to 'X' on 5 May to take down the objectionable post.

"However, the post has not been taken down yet. Therefore, 'X' is directed to take down the post immediately," the EC said.

The video cartoon shows the leaders putting an egg marked 'Muslim' on a bird's nest and after it hatches, Gandhi feeds 'funds' to the 'Muslim' hatchling while others strive for it. The 'Muslim' hatchling grows as a result and kicks the three others - SC, ST and OBC - out as Gandhi and Siddaramaiah laugh. *—PTI*

Election Commission ***PHOTO: PTI***

Heavy rain claims 12 lives in Bengal

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

As many as 12 people, including five in Purba Bardhaman district, died due to thunderstorms, lightning strikes and wall collapse during heavy rain that lashed various districts of West Bengal on Monday night, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said. A downpour since evening on Monday drenched the state capital Kolkata and other districts reeling under scorching heat for the past several days."- Profoundly sad to know that nine people died due to thunderstorms and lightning last night, while two more people died due to wall collapse in Nadia. ***—PTI***

5 cases of West Nile fever recorded in Kerala

KOZHIKODE, 7 MAY

Five cases of West Nile fever have been confirmed in the north Kerala district of Kozhikode, health officials said on Tuesday. The infected people, which included children, are all fine now and back at their homes with no new cases reported from the areas they live in, an official of the district surveillance team said. He also said that presently there was one person who is suspected of suffering from the vector-borne infection and is undergoing treatment. Meanwhile, hit by avian influenza, authorities in Alappuzha district have culled over 53,000 domestic birds this year. This year, cases of bird flu were first reported on 17 April in ducks.***—PTI***

Hacker Sriki arrested again in Bitcoin scam

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Karnataka Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has arrested alleged hacker Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki in connection with the Bitcoin scam, from a hotel in Bengaluru on Monday night. Sriki, 29, was earlier arrested by the Crime Branch in November 2020 for drug peddling and subsequently released in November 2021.

Sriki's case dates back to 2017 when Rs 1.14 crore worth of Bitcoins were stolen from Unocoin Technologies platform, a crypto currency exchange firm, leading to a complaint filed by the firm's co-founder Harish BV with the Tumakuru New Extension police station. The complaint indicated that 60.6 Bitcoins were stolen in a hacking incident on 23 June 2017. It was alleged that Sriki stole the Bitcoins from unidentified persons by hacking into their account. During investigations, the CID found that a director of the cryptocurrency exchange firm had paid Rs 7 lakh to a Bengaluru police officer to recover the stolen Bitcoins after Sriki's arrest.

The SIT is now investigating into Sriki's possession of a laptop and other electronic devices while he was in custody during 2020-2021. It is being alleged that Sriki continued to use his laptop to hack into firms dealing with crypto-currency with help from prison officers. The matter came to light when a CCTV footage from a guesthouse where Sriki was housed during his arrest revealed details of the laptop usage, leading to the recovery of the device is October 2023, which led to Sriki's arrest on Monday.

Alternatively, four former Central Crime Branch (CCB) officials have also been named as accused in the case for attempting to hack various cryptocurrency wallets, payment gateways, and stock exchange websites with the assistance of Sriki, while he was in custody.

Allegations have also surfaced that Harish BV paid a sum to Crime Branch officer Prashant Babu, as stated in court filings after the latter's arrest on 24 January, this year. The SIT, constituted by the state government in June 2023, has been actively investigating the Bitcoin scam, which occurred during the tenure of the BJP in Karnataka.

—Salar News

Srikrishna Ramesh ***PHOTO: PTI***

- The case dates back to 2017 when ₹1.14 crore worth of Bitcoins were stolen from the Unocoin Technologies platform, leading to a complaint filed by co-founder Harish BV with the Tumakuru New Extension police station. The complaint indicated that 60.6 Bitcoins were stolen in a hacking incident on 23 June, 2017

Kejri's arrest: SC raps ED over probe delay

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned Enforcement Directorate (ED) over the "delay" in its probe into the excise policy-linked money laundering case involving Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and asked the agency to produce case files before the arrest of AAP leader.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta also asked ED to produce case files before and after the arrest of Delhi's former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is also an accused in the case.

Supreme Court also said it doesn't want Arvind Kejriwal to discharge his official duties if he is released on interim bail.

The bench also asked why relevant direct questions were not put to witnesses and accused in the case. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for ED, said initially Kejriwal was not the focus of the investigation in the case.

He said Kejriwal had stayed in a seven-star hotel during the 2022 Goa Assembly polls and part of the bills were allegedly paid by the Delhi government's general administration department.

On 9 April, Delhi High Court had upheld Kejriwal's arrest, saying there was no illegality and he ED was left with "little option" after he skipped repeated summonses and refused to join the investigation. *—PTI*

Kulgam: TRF 'commander' among 2 terrorists killed

SRINAGAR, 7 MAY

Two terrorists, including a top "commander" of Lashkar-e-Taiba offshoot TRF who was involved in several cases of killing of policemen and civilians, were eliminated by security forces in an encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district on Tuesday, officials said.

One of the slain terrorists has been identified as Basit Dar, an "A" category terrorist who belonged to The Resistance Front (TRF), according to Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, VK Birdhi. He said security forces got inputs about the movement of terrorists in Redwani village following which a cordon and search operation was launched there on Monday night. "There was firing from the other side," he told reporters in Kulgam. Birdhi said the terrorists were given an opportunity to surrender, but they continued their firing on the security personnel.

"Two terrorists have been killed in this operation and their bodies have been retrieved, but the search operation is going on," he said.

Describing Dar's killing as a significant achievement, Birdhi said he was involved in 18 cases including in Srinagar city. "He was involved in the killing of police personnel and innocent civilians.He was involved in planning and carrying out attacks including on minority community members," the IGP added. *—PTI*

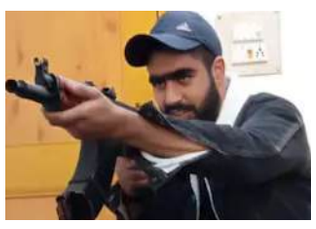


PHOTO: PTI

MISLEADING ADS

Public figures must act responsibly: SC

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

It is imperative for celebrities and public figures to act responsibly while endorsing a consumer product, Supreme Court said on Tuesday as it clamped down on misleading advertisements.

The apex court directed that before an advertisement is permitted to be issued, a self-declaration be obtained from advertisers on the line of Cable Television Network Rules, 1994. Rule 7 of the 1994 law stipulates an advertisement code that says advertisements carried should be designed to be conformity with the laws of the country.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah also directed the Union ministries concerned to apprise it of misleading advertisements and the action taken or proposed to be taken against them by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA).

"Endorsements by celebrities, influencers and public figures go a long way in promoting products and it is imperative for them to act with responsibility while endorsing any product in the course of advertisement and taking responsibility for the same," the bench observed.

The apex court was hearing the case related to misleading advertisements by Patanjali Ayurved Ltd. It is hearing a plea filed in 2022 by the Indian Medical Association alleging a smear campaign by Patanjali and yoga guru Ramdev against the Covid vaccination drive and modern systems of medicine. The bench has been critical of misleading advertisements about Patanjali products that have now been prohibited being still available on various internet channels. *—PTI*

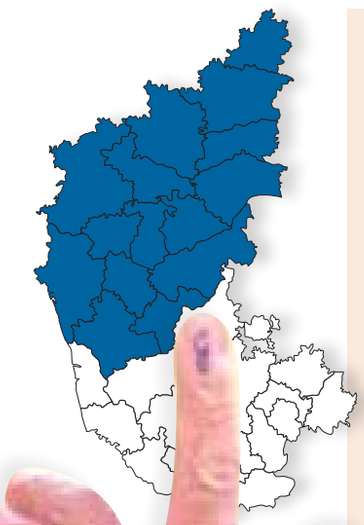
Supreme Court ***PHOTO: PTI***

In Haveri's polling booths, a play area was set up for children to help their parents cast their votes ***PHOTO: X/@CEO_KARNATAKA***

At least 256 labourers registered under MNREGA voted and headed out for work in Vijayapura

Mohan and Savita, a couple from Kurve in Ankola of Uttara Kannada, reached the polling booth on a boat

An 85-year-old woman voted in Karwar



OUR DAY, OUR RIGHT

CONG, BJP WORKERS CLASH IN RAICHUR

During the by-election in Yadgir's Surpur, a scuffle broke out between BJP and Congress workers. They pelted stones at each other. One person received a head injury. This caused a tense atmosphere in village. Meanwhile, voters at Mushturu village of Manvi taluk boycotted polling, citing lack of potable water. Villagers blocked entry points to polling booths by parking empty tankers.

HEBBALKARS IN SOUP OVER PICS IN BOOTH

BJP will file complaint with Election Commission against Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar, her son and Congress candidate from Belagavi Mrinal Hebbalkar and her brother and MLC Channaraj Hattiholi for posing for photographs inside a polling booth. BJP said it is a violation of model code of conduct and they will take up the matter with Election Commission. Lakshmi, Mrinal and Channaraj posed for photographers while casting their vote inside the polling booth in Government Kannada and Marathi Primary School in Vijayanagar. They flashed three fingers of their right hand to the photojournalists; three is the serial number of Mrinal on Electronic Voting Machine.

KOPPAL VILLAGE BOYCOTTS POLL

Residents of Vittalapur village in Kushtagi taluk of Koppal district boycotted Lok Sabha elections on Tuesday in protest against the district administration. A couple of days ago, a pregnant woman died at the Community Health Centre in Tavaragera. The villagers said the centre and Dr Kaveri Shavi are responsible for the death. On Tuesday morning, the villagers decided that they will keep away from voting. Government officials then requested the villagers to cast vote. But the villagers said they will come out to vote only if action is taken against the doctor concerned.

Specially-abled man votes in Koppal

In Hospet, a 'village life' themed booth attracted voters

International wheelchair basketball player Laxmi R Rayannavar votes in Belagavi

International swimmer Moin cast his vote in Belagavi

K'TAKA DECIDES ITS FATE AMID BJP, CONG BATTLE

This is a battle of prestige for Cong as BJP had swept all these 14 seats in 2019. 227 candidates are in the fray covering northern districts

VOTER CREATES RUCKUS AT CHIKKODI POLLING BOOTH

A voter at a polling station 154 of Mangavati village of Kagavadi taluk under Chikkodi Lok Sabha Constituency created a ruckus and caused inconvenience to people waiting in the polling booth on Tuesday. The man after casting his vote in the afternoon said he didn't hear the beep sound after he exercised his franchise. The Kagavadi resident then stood in front of the EVM and blocked the voting process. He shouted: "I have voted correctly and the machine is wrong." Security officials then escorted him out of the polling booth and voting resumed.

103-YEAR-OLD HAVERI MAN WALKS TO BOOTH, VOTES

103-year-old man Shatayushi Eramma Gudada in Gadag beat his health aliments and heat and walked to the polling station to cast his right. Haveri district administration set up a green booth and decorated it with swags of Tenginagari breeds (weaved coconut leaves). The district also had a voter helpline to help people. Haveri had 1,982 polling booths and more than 2,000 staff have been deployed for election work.

Basavaraj Bommai and his wife show inked fingers

Priyank Kharge and his family in Kalaburagi

EVMS MALFUNCTION IN KALABURAGI

Polling was disrupted for close to one hour at two polling booths in Kalaburagi district on Tuesday after EVMs malfunctioned. At polling station 146 of Ashtagi village in the district, an EVM stopped functioning in the early hours of voting. Polling was stopped for around one hour and 10 minutes and it was resumed only after experts fixed the technical glitches in the EVM. An EVM at polling station 165 at Satanur village in Chittapur taluk of the district developed technical problems after around 185 electors cast their votes till 10.30am. Voters said they were not hearing beep sound after the voting and it was fixed after an hour.

FREE ICE-CREAM, DISCOUNTED ALCOHOL FOR DHARWAD VOTERS

An ice cream shop in Hubballi city of Dharwad offered free ice creams as part of 'Cast Vote and Eat Ice-Cream Free' campaign to promote voting. The ice cream seller checked the inked fingers of the customers before offering them the free frozen treats. Some other commercial establishments also offered to serve delicacies like noodles and manchurian free of cost. Meanwhile, a bar owner also offered 3 per cent discount on MRP for alcoholic drinks.

DAVANGERE VILLAGERS BOYCOTT POLLS OVER LACK OF BASIC INFRA

The people of Ellammanagar polling station under Davangere constituency have boycotted voting. There are a total of 500 voters in this village under Lokikere Gram Panchayat. The people have withdrawn from the polls as they expressed outrage that the village has not been provided with basic infrastructure. Even the police and election officials persuaded the boycotting villagers to no avail. The villagers have insisted that they will not vote until they promise to provide basic facilities.

People wait in queues to cast their votes at a polling station during the 3rd phase of Lok Sabha polls

Election officials and staff secure EVMs, VVPATs and other materials at the end of polling

CASE FILED AGAINST BIDAR BJP CANDIDATE FOR WEARING PARTY SYMBOL ON SHIRT

Bidar police have registered a case against BJP candidate from Bidar Lok Sabha constituency Bhagwanth Khuba for going to the polling booth wearing the party symbol (lotus badge) on his shirt. When Khuba came to vote in the morning with a badge depicting the symbol of BJP, some booth agents raised objections. A verbal duel started between BJP and Congress workers and there was a brief disruption to the polling. Bidar police arrived at polling station and then filed a case against Khuba.

ROYAL POLLING BOOTH WITH KING, QUEEN THRONES SET UP IN SHIVAMOGGA

In an innovative bid to entice voters, Shivamogga Zilla Panchayat in Karnataka unveiled a polling booth that has majestic thrones reserved for voters. Mooting the idea that in a democracy citizens are the lords, the unique polling station has put up thrones for voters depicting them as Kings and Queens. The exercise seemed to be a hit with voters who posed for pictures on the 'thrones' with crowns on their heads after casting their votes at the polling booth.

BS Yediyurappa along with sons BY Raghavendra and BY Vijayendra at a polling booth in Shikaripura, Shivamogga

BALLARI CORPORATION MEMBER BOOKED FOR REVEALING HIS VOTE

A BJP member of Ballari City Corporation was booked after he posted photo of him voting on social media. Konani Tilak clicked a photo of his finger clicking on BJP candidate B Sriramulu's option in an EVM. He then posted the picture on social media, including as WhatsApp status, and wrote a caption that he had voted for Sriramulu. Ballari police registered an FIR against Tilak for violation under relevant sections for breach of secrecy of voting.

HUNDREDS WAIT AS EVMS MALFUNCTION IN UTTARA KANNADA

Polling was delayed at St Michael's School in Karwar due to glitches in electronic voting machine. An EVM malfunctioned leading to hundreds of people waiting in queue for more than one hour. People including the elderly and those with leg injuries and bandages were seen waiting in a queue since 6.45am. Congress candidate from Uttara Kannada Anjali Nimbalkar took objection to BJP agents wearing party symbols and shawls near the polling booth in Khanapur in Belagavi.

PHASE 3

11 states & Union Territories voted amid severe heatwave. Here are some tales from the day

HIGHS & LOWS FROM THE BATTLE OF BALLOTS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and wife Sonal Shah show their inked fingers after casting votes in Ahmedabad **PHOTO: PTI**

GUJARAT

Names of 700 fishermen, whose homes were razed, deleted from voter's list

Around 700 fisherfolk from Devbhumi Dwarka in Gujarat, whose homes were demolished last year, found that their names were deleted from the electoral rolls. According to the Deputy Election Officer, the names had been deleted after due process. He said they had the option of getting their names registered at the place where they have relocated. Meanwhile, Congress candidate Geniben Thakor alleged that electors were threatened to vote for BJP. Also, around a thousand voters from across three villages in Gujarat boycotted the polls.

UTTAR PRADESH

People not allowed to vote in Badaun: SP man

Samajwadi Party's (SP) Badaun candidate Aditya Yadav alleged that the administration is not letting people vote in the constituency. He said that women coming to vote were sent back. Also, youths coming to the booths with Aadhaar cards and slips were also sent back. Meanwhile, SP leader Akhilesh Yadav accused BJP workers of attempting to loot booths and unlawfully detaining Opposition members in the Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency.

ASSAM

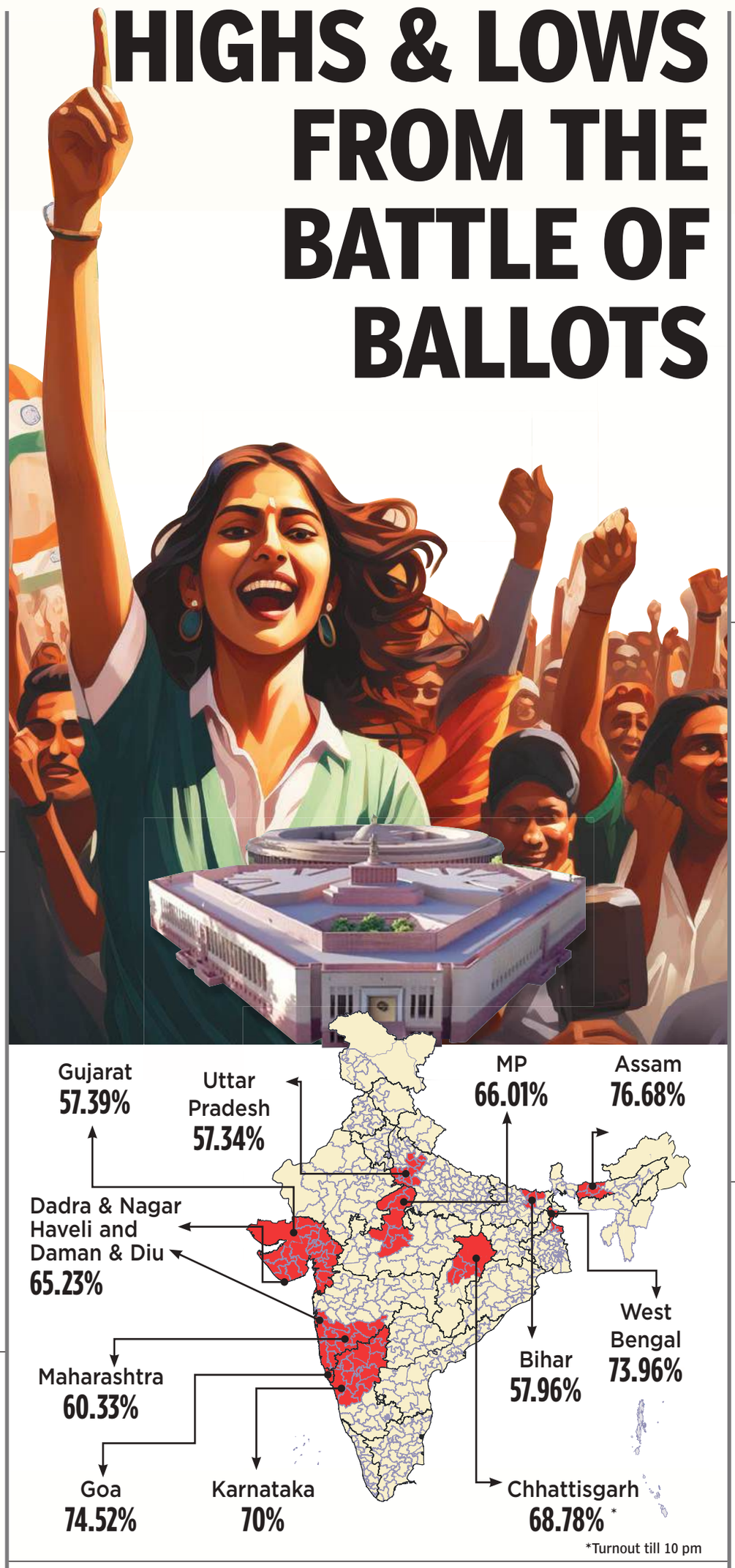
965 EVMs replaced in Assam due to glitches

A total of 965 Electronic Voting Machine components -- control units, VVPATs and ballot units -- were replaced due to malfunctioning across the four Lok Sabha seats in Assam. Several of these glitches were noticed during the mock poll, which started 90 minutes before the commencement of the actual voting. 147 CUs, 210 VVPATs and 147 BUs were replaced during the mock poll after they malfunctioned. Meanwhile, voters of Dhubri Ghat used boats to arrive at a polling booth to cast their votes.

WEST BENGAL

Sporadic incidents of violence mar polls

Incidents of violence marred the third phase of Lok Sabha polls in the four constituencies in West Bengal as TMC, BJP and Congress workers clashed with each other in various parts of Murshidabad and Jangipur seats. TMC, BJP and Congress-CPI(M) alliance lodged separate complaints related to poll violence, voter intimidation, and assaults on poll agents in the first few hours of polling, sources from the parties said. The Election Commission received 182 complaints by 9 am, from Murshidabad and Jangipur constituencies.



*Turnout till 10 pm

DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI AND DAMAN & DIU

UTs see peaceful polling

The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu reportedly saw peaceful polling on Tuesday. The district administration set up pink polling booths staffed entirely by women and this seemed to be voters' favourite spot for clicking photos. The region also saw many first time voters turn up.

MARKING THEIR RIGHT

Clockwise from top: Transgender women show their inked fingers after casting their votes at a polling station in Kheda, Gujarat; Bilkis Bano in Kapdi, Gujarat; NCP Baramati candidate Supriya Sule shows their inked finger **PHOTO: PTI/X@THEMOJOSTORY**

MAHARASHTRA

NCP (SP) files 200 plaints against Ajit faction

NCP (Sharad Pawar) lodged more than 200 complaints against NCP led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in Baramati constituency of Pune district for allegedly indulging in malpractices like cash distribution to voters, party MLA Rohit Pawar claimed. The party lodged a complaint against Bharne Indapur MLA Dattatray Bharne, who belongs to the Ajit Pawar-led NCP for threatening voters, thereby unlawfully seizing control of a polling booth in Indapur. Baramati is the home turf of the politically influential Pawar family. Also in a seperate incident, a man tried to set an EVM on fire in the Madha.

BIHAR

2 poll officers die of heart attack

Two people engaged on poll duty died of cardiac arrest in Araria and Supaul Lok Sabha seats. The deceased were identified as, Mahendra Shah, a Home guard and official Shailendra Kumar. Also, Rs 80 lakh in cash and 1.40 lakh litre of liquor (worth Rs 3.75 crore) were from different places. In another incident one EVM was damaged following a minor clash between two groups of supporters in Khagaria seat.

MADHYA PRADESH

Candidates made to sit in police control room

To ensure smooth conduct of elections, the administration made local candidates sit in the police control room in Morena in the Gwalior-Chambal region, which is considered a sensitive area, with their consent. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Digvijaya Singh, and Madhya Pradesh BJP President VD Sharma were among the early voters.

CHHATTISGARH

71-year-old dies while standing in queue

A 71-year-old man collapsed and died while standing in a queue to cast his vote in a village in Jashpur district in Raigarh Lok Sabha constituency, officials said. Jartiyus Toppo was waiting to cast his vote at polling booth No. 303 in Jamtoli village when he collapsed, a government official said. The man had reached the polling booth with his son on a motorcycle, he said. Doctors declared him dead on arrival and prima facie, cardiac arrest appears to be the cause of death, the official added.

GOA

Plaint against BJP's Dempo for poll violation

Shortly after BJP candidate Pallavi Dempo cast her vote, Sunil Kawthankar, Vice President of Goa Pradesh Congress Committee, filed a complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer in Altinho, Panaji, Goa, alleging a violation of the Model Code of Conduct against Dempo. He said, Dempo violated the code by appealing to voters at polling booth No. 15.

PHOTO: FB

Cong president Kharge visits SM Krishna in hospital

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Veteran politician and former chief minister SM Krishna is undergoing treatment at a private hospital. Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge visited him on Tuesday and wished him a speedy recovery. The hospital where the 91-year-old was admitted last week said he had come in with a "minor ailment" and is medically stable. He is recovering well and there is no need for worry, Manipal Hospitals said. While speaking to reporters here after meeting Krishna, Kharge said, "He is improving, he is speaking and enquired with me as to when I came and other things." Chief Minister Siddaramaiah too had visited the elderly Congress leader at the hospital and enquired about his health. Krishna was reportedly admitted to another super-speciality hospital in the City earlier this month,

—PTI

3 dead, 2 injured in Chikkaballapur road accident

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 7 MAY

Three people lost their lives, two others suffered injuries when the lorry turned upside down in Chikkaballapur on Monday. The incident took place when Katti Ravi, the driver, drove the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner while negotiating a slope between Chikkaballapur and Gauribidanuru resulting in the accident. The deceased have been identified as Chand, 22, Afzal, 32, and Muthu, 36. According to the police, the deceased were labourers who obtained a contract of erecting stone pillars in a farm at Gauribidanuru and were transporting stone slabs from Chikka Tirupathi in Malur taluk of Kolar district to Gauribidanur. The two others were immediately shifted to the nearest hospital.

—Salar News

Udupi is 2nd city to announce water rationing

UDUPI, 7 MAY

Udupi became the second City on Karnataka coast after Mangaluru to launch water rationing, a senior official said on Tuesday. Commissioner of Udupi City Municipal Corporation Rayappa told PTI that the rationing system will come into force from Wednesday and will continue till the water in the reservoir reaches comfortable levels. The dam built across Swarna River at Baje, which is the only source of water for Udupi City, recorded 3.25 meters of water as against the top level of 6.30 meters. Mangaluru City Corporation resorted to water rationing on Saturday following declining water levels in the reservoir built across Nethravati River at Thumbe.

—PTI

Cops distributed 25,000 pen drives: HDK

HDK demands CBI probe into 'obscene video case'

Former CM and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy addresses a press meet at the party office in Bengaluru on Tuesday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

SEX SCANDAL

Karnataka's former Chief Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday alleged that 25,000 pen drives containing obscene videos allegedly linked to Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna was circulated by police officers and demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the case. He also accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar of a conspiracy.

Addressing a press conference, Kumaraswamy claimed that the video of the alleged obscene video case was "intentionally" circulated.

"I'm addressing this Press Conference over a dirty incident that shouldn't have happened in society. On 21 April, a pen drive was circulated throughout the State. It was done by Police officers. They circulated it in Bengaluru Rural, Mandya and also in Hassan intentionally. No action has been taken by the police or election returning officer till now. Who shared the videos and pen drive? When the voting was happening, Siddaramaiah told at least 100 times that Kumaraswamy and JD(S) candidates would lose for sure and JD(S) would lose," Kumaraswamy alleged.

"On 28 April, a complaint was prepared and typed in Bengaluru and sent to Holenarasipura and an FIR was lodged there, no issues with that. So, CM formed the SIT quickly. I understand what's happening. I thought SIT would do a free and fair investigation. But I readied it's not a special investigation team, it's a Siddaramaiah investigation team and a Shivakumar investigation team," he said. He described the SIT officials as "agents" of Shivakumar, JD(S) leader and demanded to "suspend" Shivakumar from the cabinet.

"We know, there is an audio in which you have said 30-40 crores were spent for that case. Please give it to judicial inquiry, as we don't have faith in SIT," he said.

The explicit videos of alleged sexual abuse of women by Prajwal had been making the rounds on social media based on which the state government formed the SIT on 28 April to probe the case.

The 33-year-old Prajwal, who was the NDA candidate in the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency, reportedly left the country on 27 April.

Interpol has issued a Blue Corner notice against the absconding MP, who is facing sexual abuse charges.

—ANI/ PTI

Congress wants to politicise it: Vijayendra

BJP Chief BY Vijayendra accused Congress of politicising the alleged sex scandal involving Prajwal Revanna. Addressing the media on Tuesday, Vijayendra criticised Congress for allegedly failing to prevent Revanna from leaving the country despite having the power to do so. He claimed that Congress was exploiting the situation for political gains. . *—ANI*

Posters target CM, DKS in City

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

The posters of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar surfaced in the City accusing Shivakumar of exploiting videos and images of women related to the alleged sex abuse scandal involving JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna on Tuesday.

The posters followed after the protest staged by JD(S) workers in front of Shivakumar's residence along with BJP leader and lawyer G Devarajegowda claimed that the investigation into the sexual abuse allegations against Prajwal was politically motivated, alleging that the Congress government was trying to target him. He said that the circulated videos were morphed and that victims were being influenced with money to appear before investigating officials.

On Monday, Devarajegowda alleged that Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar approached him with deals and attempted to persuade him.

Siddaramaiah said, "Totally false and far from the truth, The SIT involves the most efficient, honest and impartial officers. It is functioning with full autonomy with complete freedom, independence and in an impartial manner without government interference."

Shivakumar also refuted the claims, labelling them as a "bundle of lies."

—Salar News

Victim was not rescued from farmhouse: Sa Ra Mahesh

MYSURU, 7 MAY

Krishnarajanagara MLA Sa Ra Mahesh said that the abducted victim in Prajwal Revanna's scandal case was not rescued from the farmhouse in Hunsur as claimed by SIT officials. In a joint press conference conducted on Tuesday, former minister GT Devegowda and Mahesh alleged it is politically motivated. Expressing frustration over the delayed arrests of those who shared the pen drive, Mahesh accused certain officers within the SIT of acting as puppets of Congress. He alleged that the handling of the case was a deliberate attempt to suppress JD (S) leaders and questioned the whereabouts of the victim. Calling for a judicial inquiry, Devegowda demanded the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister, holding him responsible for the situation. He urged the government to take action or face further consequences.

—Salar News

Silent Modi & Media
A massive 'sex abuse' case hits a general election
Who is PRAJWAL REVANNA?
Grandson of EX PM HD Devegowda
More than 1000 leaked videos of sexually abusing women including 60+ elderly women
Favourite of MODI & BJP
SDPI
ಪ್ರತಿಭಟನೆ

SDPI members protest against Central govt and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Siddaramaiah, Parameshwara CDs may come soon: Jarkiholi

BELAGAVI, 7 MAY

Former minister Ramesh Jarakiholi has stirred the political landscape with explosive statements by stating that the CD factory has videos of multiple political leaders including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara. He also alleged that if such videos come out online one day it should not come as surprise. However, he refrained from disclosing details to the media, citing an impending revelation after 4 June. He asked Siddaramaiah and Parameshwar to address the matter impartially.

—Salar News

BJP leader Devaraj Gowda is involved: Cong MLA

MANDYA, 7 MAY

Congress MLA Ravikumar Ganiga has dropped a bombshell implicating a former MLA of Hassan, currently holding a prominent position within BJP at the State level, in the pen drive controversy. Addressing the allegations surrounding Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's involvement in the case, Ganiga raised questions about the potential collusion between the former MLA and Shivakumar. Ganiga pointedly questioned why Devaraj Gowda and the former BJP MLA, would not have conspired to meet Shivakumar as thousands of others had done so. *—Salar News*

63 control rooms set up to address rain issues

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company Ltd (BESCOM) have set up 63 control rooms to address civic and power related issues amid rains. Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath on Tuesday directed officials to inspect drainage near metro construction sites and clearance of silt from rajakuluves.

Girinath said BESCOM helpline 1912 has been unreachable, so people can send messages and pictures along with address on these WhatsApp numbers:
Bengaluru East - 8277884013,
Bengaluru West- 8277884012,
Bengaluru North- 8277884014,
Bengaluru South- 8277884011.
Bengaluru Rural - 8277884017,
Kolar- 8277884015,
Chikkaballapura- 8277884016,
Ramanagara- 8277884018,
Tumakuru 8277884019,
Chitradurga- 8277884020 and
Davangere - 8277884021.
Emergency WhatsApp Numbers are 9483191212, 9483191222. BESCOM number for the entire City- 9449844640.

Mobile numbers for calls and SMS: 9480816108, 9480816109, 9480816110, 9480816111, 9480816112, 9480816113, 9480816114, 9480816115, 9480816116, 9480816117, 9480816118 and 9480816119.

—Salar News

One vote will give you 10 guarantees: Surjewala

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Randeep Singh Surjewala **PHOTO: PTI**

Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala took to his official X handle and appealed to the voters to vote for the party for a 'peaceful tomorrow.' He also tweeted about the party's five guarantees that have reached the public.

In a post on X, Surjewala said, "One vote, 10 guaranteed (schemes)... By fulfilling the promises made in the last assembly election, the guarantee schemes have reached the houses and the common people are leading their lives comfortably."

In a post, Karnataka Congress tweeted, "One vote, ten guaranteed (schemes). Five guarantee schemes of the State government have already been successfully implemented and are helping people's lives. After the coming of Congress government at the Centre, five more justice guarantees will be implemented and will change people's lives."

The post further said, "Support Congress's promise of comprehensive development including students, farmers, women, workers, backward classes."

Karnataka has 28 Lok Sabha seats and elections in the state are being held in two phases. Voting for 14 seats concluded on 26 April and the voting for the remaining 14 seats took place on 7 May.

This time BJP and JD-S are in coalition with the former fighting on 25 seats, while the latter is contesting three seats.

—ANI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

VOTE FOR GOVT THAT WILL INVEST IN FARMERS: AMIT

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday appealed to voters in Karnataka to vote for a government that will continue to invest in infrastructure development of the State, support farmers and deliver justice to the poor.

Voting for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in the State began in 14 constituencies at 7am on 7 May and ended at 6pm.

"I appeal to the people to vote for the government that will continue to invest in infrastructure development of the State, support to farmers and justice for the poor, SCs, STs, OBCs and for the betterment of the State," he said in a post on X.

The first phase of polls in 14 constituencies of Karnataka on 26 April recorded a 69.56 per cent voter turnout.

The segments where polling was held on Tuesday are; Chikkodi, Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar, Koppal, Ballari, Haveri, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada, Davangere and Shivamogga.

A total of 227 candidates -- 206 men and 21 women -- are in the fray for the second phase covering the northern districts of the State where more than 2.59 crore voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in 28,269 polling stations.

—ANI

City woman steals ₹65L gold from sister, arrested

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

A woman was arrested in the City for allegedly stealing gold ornaments worth Rs 65 lakh from her elder sister's residence.

Kengeri police arrested Uma, the accused. She carried out the theft while her sister was out of town.

Uma's sister had left the keys of her house with a relative. Taking advantage, Uma allegedly used a duplicate key to gain entry into the house and absconded with 182 grams of gold and Rs 52 lakh cash.

Addressing the press conference, City Police Commissioner B Dayananda said, "Uma, originally from Mandya but residing in Laggere, had been facing financial difficulties and had borrowed money from various sources, including a local chit fund. To cover her tracks, she scattered chili powder before fleeing the scene." Dayananda awarded Kengeri police officers Rs 25,000 for cracking the case.

Missing boy found

In a separate incident, Dayananda said a missing boy was found in Puri's Jagannath temple after his parents filed a complaint. The boy was also robbed of his gold ornaments worth Rs 6 lakh by an auto driver, who was later arrested. Basaveshwaranagar police was awarded Rs 10,000.

Crime digest

Bengaluru Police Release April Month Crime Report on Tuesday. The City police arrested 369 individuals and registered 48 cases related to cricket betting, 41 cases were filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, leading to the arrest of 50 individuals, 5 arrested for involvement in a fake currency racket, with counterfeit notes worth Rs 30 crore seized, 6 were held.

—Salar News

FINES UP TO RS 10 LAKH

Govt bans liquid nitrogen in food

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

The Department of Food Safety and Quality in the State has imposed a ban on the use of liquid nitrogen in food. In a press release, the department addressed the concerns regarding the potential risks associated with liquid nitrogen in food consumption. The government has advised to to prohibit its use outside of dairy-based products. The move aims to safeguard public health and prevent any further incidents of harm to consumers.

Citing the Food Safety and Quality Act of 2006, the department issued an order to the restaurants and hotels. Offenders may be fined up to Rs 10 lakh and subjected to imprisonment ranging from 7 years to a lifetime, depending on the severity of the violation.

Govt has prohibited its use outside of dairy products **PHOTO: PTI**

The decision comes after the Tamil Nadu government banned the liquid nitrogen after a video of a boy from Karnataka screaming in pain went viral after consuming a 'smoking biscuit' two weeks back. Similarly a few years ago, a young businessman in Gurugram had a part of his stomach removed after he consumed a cocktail laced with liquid nitrogen. The CT scan showed a hole that turned out to be about 10 cm in length in the lower part of the stomach.

—Salar News

What is liquid nitrogen?

Liquid nitrogen is a nitrogen that has gone from its natural gaseous state to a liquid state. It is extremely cold and has a boiling point of -196 degree Celsius. It is not a toxic material, which is why it is widely used in the food and medical industry. It can quickly cause cold burns or even frostbite on the limbs.

PHOTO: PTI

BJP's Manoj Tiwari richest LS poll contender in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

BJP's Manoj Tiwari,53, is the richest among the prominent Lok Sabha poll candidates in Delhi with assets worth Rs 28.05 crore. Ramvir Singh Bidhuri,71, the BJP candidate from South Delhi, is on the second spot with assets worth Rs 21.08 crore. According to his income-tax returns for 2022-23, Bidhuri has an annual income of Rs 14.93 lakh. The third-richest among the poll contenders is Mahabal Mishra,69, AAP candidate from West Delhi. He has declared assets worth Rs 19.93 crore. Mishra's highest qualification is pre-university certificate from the LS College in Bihar's Muzaffarpur that he obtained in 1971. Bansuri Swaraj,40, daughter of late Sushma Swaraj, with assets worth Rs 19 crore, occupies the fourth spot.—*PTI*

Actor Shekhar Suman, ex-Cong leader join BJP

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Former Congress leader Radhika Khera and actor Shekhar Suman joined the BJP here on Tuesday amid the on-going Lok Sabha election. Khera, the former national coordinator of the Congress's media department, resigned from the party's primary membership on Sunday, days after her altercation with another leader at the party's Chhattisgarh office.In her resignation letter to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Khera also said she was facing opposition in the party for her visit to the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Both Khera and Suman joined the saffron at its headquarters here in the presence of senior leaders, including BJP national general secretary Vinod Tawde and national media department in-charge Anil Baluni.—*PTI*

Salman firing: Bishoi gang member held

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

The Mumbai crime branch has arrested a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang from Rajasthan for allegedly providing financial help to the shooters involved in firing outside superstar Salman Khan's house, officials said on Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Mohammed Rafique Chowdhary,37, an official said. He is the fifth person to be arrested in the firing case. The official said Chowdhary's role had come to light during the interrogation of the people arrested in the case. He is a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, and was in direct contact with the alleged shooters - Sagar Pal and Vicky Gupta, the official said. He provided financial support to Pal and Gupta he said.—*PTI*

Wild jumbo hit by train in Palakkad dies

PALAKKAD, 7 MAY

An adult female wild elephant died late on Monday night near Kanjikode here after being hit by a train making it the second such incident within a month in the district. A senior forest official said on Tuesday that the incident occurred around 10.30pm yesterday when the Thiruvananthapuram-Chennai Mail hit the jumbo which had come close to the tracks. This being the second such incident in Palakkad district within a month, the forest department is going to hold a meeting with Southern Railway to discuss possible solutions, including putting up fencing in the area, the official said. He also said that the forest department would be examining whether the train had exceeded the stipulated speed limit of 45 kilometers per hour—*PTI*

Jharkhand cash haul: ED nabs min's secy, house help

The agency unearthed more than ₹32 cr in cash from the flat

RANCHI, 7 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam's personal secretary Sanjiv Lal and the latter's domestic help on Tuesday following a recovery of more than Rs 32 crore in cash from a flat linked to them, official sources said.

The duo were taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following their overnight questioning, the sources said.

They said the two did not co-operate in the investigation and were "evasive" to the questions asked by the ED officials.

As part of a money-laundering investigation into alleged irregularities in the state rural development department, the ED on Monday raided a two-bedroom flat in Ranchi that was allegedly occupied by Lal's domestic help, Jehangir Alam.

Cash recovered by the ED at a flat linked to Jharkhand Minister Alamgir Alam's secretary and latter's domestic help PHOTO: PTI

The agency unearthed more than Rs 32 crore in cash from the flat located at the Gadikhana chowk, apart from Rs 3 crore from some other premises that were searched.

The total cash recovery stands at Rs 35.23 crore, the sources said.

Jharkhand Rural Development Minister Alam (of the Congress) has denied any wrongdoing on his part.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the cash haul at his poll rallies in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha on Monday, saying "mounds of cash" were seized by the ED in Jharkhand, and wondered why such people are "close to the Congress's first family".

"They have made the worker's house a godown of corruption. This is not the first time as a bigger seizure was made from an MP (in Jharkhand) earlier also and it was such a big cache that even machines were tired of counting," Modi said at Vemagiri in Andhra Pradesh.

The Congress and other opposition parties have accused the BJP-led Centre of misusing agencies like the ED to target their leaders.The federal agency also seized from the flat an official communication from May 2023 written by the Ranchi unit of the ED to the Jharkhand chief secretary seeking an independent probe and the registration of an FIR into the "revelations" of alleged bribes taken from contractors who worked for the state rural development department. —*PTI*

'DISCREPANCIES AN ISSUE'

Kharge writes to INDIA bloc on EC's poll data

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the leaders of various parties of the INDIA opposition bloc on Tuesday, questioning the alleged discrepancies in the voting data released by the Election Commission (EC).

In his letter, Kharge urged the INDIA bloc leaders to raise their voice against such discrepancies, for "our only objective is to protect the culture of a vibrant democracy and the Constitution".

"Let us ensure the independence of the Election Commission of India and make it accountable," he said in his letter.

"As the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), it should be our collective endeavour to safeguard democracy and protect the independent functioning of the ECI. All the aforementioned facts force us to ask a question -- could this be an attempt to doctor the final results?" he asked.

"We all know how Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and the BJP are visibly flustered and frustrated by the voting trends and their receding electoral fortunes in the first two phases. The entire nation knows that an autocratic regime, drunk with power, can go to any extent to stay in the chair," Kharge said.

"I would urge all of you that we must collectively, unitedly and unequivocally raise our voice against such discrepancies, for our only objective is to protect the culture of a vibrant democracy and the Constitution," he added.

Several opposition parties have raised questions on the delay in releasing the polling data by the EC.

Sharing his letter on X, Kharge said, "My letter to the leaders of INDIA parties, regarding the discrepancies in the voting data released by Election Commission of India and non-publishing of registered voters." —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the leaders of various parties of the INDIA opposition bloc on Tuesday, questioning the alleged discrepancies in the voting data released by the Election Commission (EC)

SP man calls Ayodhya temple 'bekaar', BJP hits back

LUCKNOW, 7 MAY

Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav has courted controversy with his remarks that the Ram temple in Ayodhya is "bekaar (useless)" as it has not been properly constructed, inviting sharp criticism from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who said that this shows the "reality" of the INDIA bloc.

Asked why opposition leaders did not go to the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Yadav told a news channel, "Roz Ram ka darshan karte hein (We pay obeisance to Lord Ram daily)".

PHOTO: PTI

To another query about visiting the Ayodhya temple, he said, "Wo mandir bekaar ka hai (That temple is useless)".

"Are temples constructed like this? See the old temples... they are not constructed like this - from south to north. The map (of the temple) is not appropriate and not up to the mark as per 'Vastu'," he claimed.

Chief Minister Adityanath said Yadav's statement shows the reality of the SP, the Congress and their INDIA bloc partners. "Ram Gopal Yadav's statement is an insult to the Sanatan faith of millions of Ram devotees. The faith of those who have dedicated their entire lives to the Ram Temple is being attacked. Indian society cannot accept this at all," the Chief Minister said, adding that the intention behind the statement was to hurt people's feelings. —*PTI*

DEEPFAKE ROW

HC orders no coercive action against Cong in Shah video case

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Telangana High Court recently ordered that no coercive action be taken against Indian National Congress workers in a case involving a fake video of Union Home Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Amit Shah.

In an order passed on 3 May, Justice B Vijaysen Reddy directed both the State and Delhi police to refrain from taking any coercive steps against the Congress workers.

However, the present order shall not come in the way of the State in investigating the matter, the Court added.

The Court further directed the Commissioner of Police of Hyderabad, the principal secretary (Home), and others to submit their responses to the plea by Congress workers.

PHOTO: PTI

The plea was filed by Congress workers Manne Sathish, Asma Tasleem, Ambala Shiva Kumar, Pettam Naveen, Koya Geetha, and Pendyala Vamshi Krishna challenging a case registered against them by the Delhi police based on a complaint filed by one Shinku Sharan Singh. The petitioners are accused of sharing a manipulated video clip of Home Minister Amit Shah on social media.

The complaint alleged the manipulation and dissemination of a video featuring Shah, purportedly suggesting that reservations for Scheduled Castes/ Schedule Tribes (SC/ STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) would be abolished if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) remains in power at the Centre.

On 3 May, the Hyderabad Police arrested several members from the Telangana Congress party in connection with the case. —*Bars and Bench*

Revanth violated MCC, defer crop payment: EC

NEW DELHI 7 MAY

The Election Commission on Tuesday directed the Telangana government to defer payments under the Rythu Bharosa scheme till Lok Sabha polls are held in the state on May 13, saying Chief Minister Revanth Reddy violated the model code of conduct by referring to the payouts in his public speeches.

In a letter to theTelangana Chief Electoral Officer, the Commission said Reddy had violated the model code of conduct by publicly speaking about the ensuing disbursement under the scheme on or before 9 May.

"In the above premise and clear violation of Model Code of Conduct by Revanth Reddy, President Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee and star campaigner and Chief Minister, the Commission has directed that disbursement of balance instalment under the Rythu Bharosa scheme for Rabi season of 2023 will be effected only after completion of poll in the state of Telangana on 13.05.2024," the Commission said.

It also expressed concern over attempts to politicise the ongoing scheme during the elections. —*PTI*

- It also expressed concern over attempts to politicise the ongoing scheme during the elections.

BJP SLAMS LALU OVER 'MUSLIMS MUST GET QUOTA'

PATNA, 7 MAY

RJD president Lalu Prasad on Tuesday said he was in favour of extending reservation benefits to Muslims.

He alleged that the ruling BJP at the Centre wanted to do away with reservations by scrapping the Constitution.

"The BJP is against the provision of reservations made in the Constitution. Hence, it wants to do away with both", Prasad told reporters at the legislative council premises.

RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's remarks on Muslim quota have made it clear that if voted to power, the INDIA bloc will provide reservation to the minority community by making changes in the Constitution's fundamental structure, the BJP charged on Tuesday. —*PTI*

SC stays HC order annulling appointment of 25,753 teachers in WB

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Calcutta High Court order invalidating the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff made by the state's School Service Commission (SSC) in state-run and state-aided schools.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, however, permitted the CBI to continue with its investigation and probe even members of the state cabinet.

The top court, however, asked the CBI not to take any precipitate action like arresting a suspect during the investigation.

Earlier in the day, it termed the alleged scam as a "systemic fraud" and said the state authorities were duty-bound to maintain digitised records pertaining to the appointment of teachers and non-teaching staff.

PHOTO: PTI

The bench said the state government has nothing to show that relevant data was maintained by the authorities and asked about its availability.

"Either you have the data or you do not have it.... You were duty-bound to maintain the documents in digitised form. Now, it is obvious that there is no data. You are unaware of the fact that your service provider has engaged another agency. You had to maintain supervisory control," the bench told the state government's lawyers.

The state government had challenged the Calcutta High Court order, saying it cancelled the appointments "arbitrarily". —*PTI*

- The bench said the state government has nothing to show that relevant data was maintained by the authorities and asked about its availability

CBI seizes ₹1.42 cr in FSSAI bribery case

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The CBI on Tuesday seized more than Rs 1.42 crore cash during searches at the premises of a Thane-based company's manager who was arrested along with a Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) assistant director in a bribery case, officials said.

The searches started on Monday at Reliable Analytical Laboratories Pvt Ltd's senior manager Harshal Chougule's residence following his arrest, they said.

Besides him, the agency on Monday also arrested assistant director at the FSSAI's regional office in Mumbai, Amol Jagtap, and the company's director, Vikas Bhardwaj, and a representative of the company in the case from Mumbai, they said.

The officials said besides the cash, the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI) also seized two gold biscuits, a laptop and incriminating documents during the further searches on Tuesday at the premises of Chougule.

Chougule was arrested for allegedly paying a bribe Rs 1.20 lakh to Jagtap for clearing pending bills of the company, they said.

The searches on Monday conducted at the residence of the accused resulted in the seizure of Rs 37.3 lakh cash, about 45 gram gold and documents pertaining to various immovable properties and other incriminating documents, the officials said.

Reliable Analytical Laboratories Pvt Ltd runs a chain of chemical laboratories notified by the FSSAI and the company is engaged in analysis of samples forwarded to it by the authority. —*PTI*

DELHI HC SAYS

'Educate minors on virtual touch'

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Teaching minors about 'good touch' and 'bad touch' is not enough in today's virtual world and children must be educated on the emerging concept of 'virtual touch' and its potential dangers, the Delhi High Court has said.

This involves teaching them appropriate online behaviour, recognising warning signs of predatory behaviour and understanding the importance of privacy settings and online boundaries.

"This court is constrained to note that in today's virtual modern world where virtual space has also become a breeding ground of alleged virtual affections between teenagers, they are not equipped to deal with the potential dangers of human trafficking for prostitution and other side of crimes which exists in the virtual world," Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said on Monday.

Delhi High Court said minors should be made aware of good touch and bad touch PHOTO: PTI

The high court's observations came while dismissing a bail plea by a woman, Kamlesh Devi, accused of helping her son in sexually assaulting a minor girl after kidnapping her and forcing her into prostitution.

The 16-year-old was allegedly kidnapped by Rajiv who befriended her on social media and kidnapped her when she came to meet him. The girl was taken to Madhya Pradesh and confined there for several days. She was allegedly sexually assaulted by the man and others.

It added that just as children are taught to exercise caution in the physical world, efforts must be made to teach them to develop critical thinking skills to safeguard their personal information. —*PTI*

NARESH GOYAL HAS RIGHT TO TREATMENT: HC

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

A prisoner also has the right to medical treatment and is entitled to dignity, the Bombay High Court observed while granting interim bail for two months on medical grounds to Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal, arrested in a money laundering case.

A single bench of Justice NJ Jamadar said there was a difference between undergoing treatment as an undertrial prisoner and as a citizen with no restraint.

The bench had on Monday granted interim bail for two months to Goyal on medical grounds.

Goyal,75, had sought interim bail on medical and humanitarian grounds as both he and his wife, Anita Goyal, are suffering from cancer. —*PTI*

2 Palestinians arrested for supporting Hamas

TEL AVIV, 7 MAY

Combating online incitement and support for terrorism, Israeli police arrested two Palestinians in eastern Jerusalem with ties to Hamas, the police said on Tuesday. One suspect, a 35-year-old man, was arrested on Monday and is charged with incitement and supporting Hamas. The second suspect, 39, was arrested last week also for posting inflammatory content supporting Hamas. Indictments against both are expected to be filed in the coming days. "Past experience shows that there is a direct connection between incitement and support for terrorism and acts of terrorism," the police said. Online incitement, frequently targeting Palestinian teens, is often traced back to the Palestinian Authority and local clergy. Israeli security forces have arrested more than 4,000 Palestinian terror suspects in Judea and Samaria since 7 October, of whom around 1,700 are affiliated with Hamas *—PTI*

Aus accuses China of endangering naval chopper

MELBOURNE, 7 MAY

Australia has protested to Beijing through multiple channels that a Chinese fighter jet endangered an Australian navy helicopter with flares over international waters, the prime minister said Tuesday. The incident occurred Saturday as the Australian air warfare destroyer HMAS Hobart was enforcing UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea in international waters in the Yellow Sea, officials said Monday. There were no injuries or damage reported. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the Australian public expected an explanation from China.Defense Minister Richard Marles said Monday that a Chinese Chengdu J-10 fighter jet released flares in the flight path of an Australian navy Seahawk helicopter deployed from the Hobart.*—PTI*

Taiwan detects 10 Chinese aircraft, 5 naval vessels

TAIPEI, 7 MAY

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence on Tuesday said that 10 aircraft and five vessels from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) were detected operating around Taiwanese waters and airspace until 6 am (UTC+8) today. Notably, 4 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's southwestern and eastern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). The Republic of China Armed Forces (ROCArmedForces) closely monitored the situation and responded appropriately, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence. nation's airspace and waters, adding, that two aircraft entered its ADIZ. *—PTI*

2 dead, 23 injured in hospital stabbing in China

BEIJING, 7 MAY

The stabbing happened in Zhenxiong People's Hospital in the southwestern Yunnan province. A knife attack at a hospital in south-west China has left at least two people killed and several others injured. The stabbing happened at 13.20 local time at Zhenxiong People's Hospital in Yunnan province, state media reported. At least 23 people have been injured in the attack, but reports said these numbers were not final. Images published by China's The Paper showed a man in black, who appeared to be wielding a knife in each hand. Another man was standing in front of him in that shot. Footage on The Paper also showed police vehicles and at least a dozen police officers outside the hospital. *—PTI*

Israel takes 'operational' control of Rafah crossing

20 Hamas terrorists have been killed since the op began

TEL AVIV, 7 MAY

Israel seized control of the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) confirmed on Tuesday morning after launching an overnight ground operation in parts of the southern Gaza city.

"Following intelligence that indicated that the Rafah Crossing in eastern Rafah was being used for terrorist purposes, IDF troops obtained operational control of the Gazan side of the crossing," the army said.

Ground troops and fighter jets struck and eliminated Hamas terror targets in the Rafah area including military facilities and underground sites. According to the IDF, 20 Hamas terrorists have been killed and three operational tunnel shafts have been found since the operation began.

On Sunday, Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from the area of the Rafah border crossing and near an area where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in tents. The barrage targeted the Kerem Shalom border crossing, killing four soldiers. Of all the Gaza border crossings, Kerem Shalom is equipped to handle the most humanitarian aid trucks daily. The crossing has been closed since the attack.

Hamas's control of the border crossing allowed it to hijack humanitarian aid deliveries from Egypt.

In recent days, residents of certain Rafah neighbourhoods received phone calls, SMS messages, air-dropped flyers, and media broadcasts instructing them to evacuate to expanded humanitarian zones in Khan Yunis and the coastal area of Al-Mawasi. The flyers included maps showing the affected zones, and aid organisations were updated on the evacuation plans.

Also receiving messages to evacuate were displaced Palestinians camping in a strip of land along the Gaza-Egypt border known as the Philadelphi corridor. This buffer zone was created to prevent weapons smuggling after Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2006. But in 2007, Hamas violently seized control of Gaza from the PA.

The Egypt-Gaza border is politically sensitive, technically a demilitarised zone under the terms of the Camp David Accords signed in 1978.

At least 1,200 people were killed and 240 Israelis and foreigners were taken hostage in Hamas's attacks. *—PTI*

Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike on buildings near the separating wall between Egypt and Rafah in southern Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

Hamas accepts Qatar proposal

Gaza City, 7 May

Hamas has accepted a proposal mediated by Qatar and Egypt, marking a potential breakthrough in the ongoing conflict in Gaza, CNN reported. The proposal, outlined in a document in the region, lays out a comprehensive plan aimed at de-escalating tensions and paving the way for sustainable peace. According to the document, the agreement will be implemented in three phases, each lasting 42 days. The first phase entails the release of 33 Israeli hostages, including women, children, the elderly, and the sick, over the course of six weeks. —ANI

Nepal's ruling coalition JSP-N party splits

KATHMANDU, 7 MAY

The Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N), one of the coalition partners in Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda-led government, has split after a majority of its lawmakers and over two dozen central committee members applied for a new party at the Election Commission.

A faction of the JSP-N led by the party's federal council chair Ashok Rai registered the application for a new party while the party's chair Deputy Prime Minister Upendra Yadav, who is also minister for health and population, is on a trip abroad.

Pradip Yadav, a lawmaker of the JSP-N, said that 29 central committee members and seven lawmakers have jointly applied to form a new party.

Of the party's 12 House of Representatives members, seven -Rai, Sushila Sherstha, Pradip Yadav, Nawal Kishor Sah, Ranju Kumari Jha, Birendra Mahato and Hasina Khan - have supported the new party named 'Janata Samajbadi Party' (without the 'Nepal' of the mother party).

The Election Commission on Monday officially recognised the Ashok Rai-led Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) as a new political party.

Party insiders said that Rai registered the new party at the advice of Prime Minister Prachanda to counter Yadav, whose relations with the ruling alliance have soured lately. There are reports Yadav was trying to ally with the opposition Nepali Congress and the ruling party alliance CPN-Unified Socialist-led by Madhav Kumar Nepal after NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba reportedly offered the Prime Minister's post to Yadav to topple the Prachanda-led government. *—ANI*

Police arrests some 125 protestors as they broke up a pro-palestinian camp at University of Amsterdam on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Berlin police break up pro-Palestinian protests

AMSTERDAM, 7 MAY

German police on Tuesday broke up a protest by several hundred pro-Palestinian activists who had occupied a courtyard at Berlin's Free University earlier in the day, the latest such action by authorities as protests that have roiled campuses in the United States spread across Europe.

The protesters had put up about 20 tents and formed a human chain around the tents. Most had covered their faces with medical masks and had draped kufiyah scarves around their heads, shouting slogans such as "Viva, viva Palestina".

Earlier on Tuesday, Dutch police arrested about 125 activists as they broke up a similar pro-Palestinian demonstration camp at the University of Amsterdam.

In Berlin, police called on the students via loudspeakers to leave the campus. Police could also be seen carrying some students away and some scuffles erupted between police officers and protesters.

Police used pepper spray against some of the protesters. The school's administrators said in a statement that the protesters had rejected any kind of dialogue and they had therefore called in police to clear the campus. Amsterdam police said on the social media platform X that their action was "necessary to restore order" after protests turned violent. There were no reports of injuries. *—PTI*

RAIN WREAKS HAVOC

Clockwise from top left: Tornadoes were spotted after dark skirting northern Oklahoma, including one that touched down about a 45-minute drive north of Tulsa; Catastrophic floods in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul have displaced 850,000, injured hundreds and destroyed countless buildings, roads, bridges; A woman, cradling a dog, wades through a street flooded by heavy rains in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state in Brazil **PHOTO: X/@WORLD NEWS, @MARIO NAWFAL, PTI**

POLICE SEARCH BRUSSELS OFFICE OVER CHINA SPYING ALLEGATIONS

BERLIN, 7 MAY

Authorities were searching the European parliament office of a prominent German far-right lawmaker in Brussels on Tuesday, Germany's top prosecutor's office said. Maximilian Krah, alternative for Germany party's top candidate in the upcoming European Parliament elections, has been under scrutiny after an assistant of his was arrested last month on suspicion of spying for China. Jian Guo — a German national who had worked for Krah since his election to the European Union legislature in 2019 — has been accused of working for a Chinese intelligence service and of repeatedly passing on information on negotiations and decisions in the European Parliament in January. The top prosecutor's office said in a statement Tuesday that "European Parliament has consented to enter the premises." An apartment of Guo in Brussels had already been searched last month, the prosecutors' statement said *—PTI*

Xi visits Serbia on 25th year of NATO's bombing

BELGRADE, 7 MAY

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's visit to European ally Serbia on Tuesday falls on a symbolic date: the 25th anniversary of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during NATO's air war over Kosovo.

US jets dropped five bombs on the Chinese Embassy compound in the Serbian capital on May 7, 1999, setting it ablaze and killing three Chinese nationals. Twenty other people were injured in the incident, which has burdened relations between the two powers ever since.

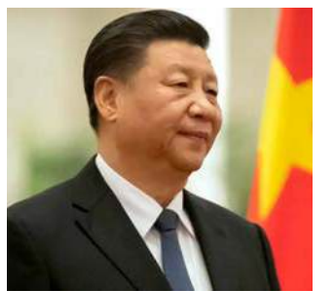


PHOTO: PTI

The Western military alliance had launched the air war in March that year to force then Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic to end a brutal onslaught against ethnic Albanian rebels in Kosovo.

- Protesters in China stormed US diplomatic installations as the bombing fuelled anti-American sentiments and speculation that the attack was intentional rather than accidental

The US at the time apologised and said the embassy bombing was a mistake that happened due to faulty intelligence. The intended target, Washington said, was the headquarters of a Serbian state arms exporter located on the same street, a few blocks away.

"So for a country like China, it is also clear that this is a big thing," he added. "And, of course, it has not been forgotten." Protesters in China stormed US diplomatic installations as the bombing fuelled anti-American sentiments and speculation that the attack was intentional rather than accidental. *—PTI*

Putin starts his 5th term as President

MOSCOW, 7 MAY

Vladimir Putin begins his fifth term as Russian President in an opulent Kremlin inauguration Tuesday, after destroying his political opponents, launching a devastating war in Ukraine and consolidating all power in his hands.

Already in office for nearly a quarter-century and the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Josef Stalin, Putin's new term doesn't expire until 2030, when he is constitutionally eligible to run for another six years.

He has transformed Russia from a country emerging from economic collapse to a pariah state that threatens global security. Following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine Russia has been heavily sanctioned by the West and is turning other regimes like China, Iran and North Korea for support. The question now is what the Putin will do over the course of another six years, both at home and abroad. Russian forces are gaining ground in Ukraine, deploying scorched-earth tactics as Kyiv grapples with shortages of men and ammunition. Both sides are taking heavy casualties.

Ukraine says it foiled assassination attempt on Zelenskyy

Ukrainian counterintelligence investigators have foiled a Russian plot to assassinate President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other top military and political figures, Ukraine's state security service said Tuesday.

It quoted the head of the State Security Service, Vasyl Maliuk, as saying the plot foresaw an attack ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inauguration for a fifth term Tuesday. Maliuk said he personally oversaw the top-secret operation to track the plot.

Ukrainian claims of Russian efforts to kill Zelenskyy are not new. Zelensky said in 2022 there has been at least 10 attempts to assassinate him as the war with Russia stretches into a third year. *—PTI*

CITES VALVE ISSUE

Boeing calls off its first astronaut launch

Atlas V rocket with Boeing's Starliner capsule aboard is illuminated by spotlights on the launch pad at Space Launch Complex 41 ahead of the NASA's Boeing Crew Flight Test on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

CAPE CANAVERAL, 7 MAY

Boeing called off its first astronaut launch because of a valve problem on the rocket Monday night.

The two NASA test pilots had just strapped into Boeing's Starliner capsule for a flight to the International Space Station when the countdown was halted, just two hours before the planned liftoff.

United Launch Alliance CEO Tory Bruno said an oxygen pressure-relief valve on the upper stage of the company's Atlas rocket started fluttering open and close, creating a loud buzz.

The valve may have exceeded its 200,000 lifetime cycles, Bruno said, which means it would have to be replaced, pushing the launch into next week. It was the latest delay for Boeing's first crew flight, on hold for years because of capsule trouble.

Bruno said similar valve trouble had occurred in years past on a few other Atlas rockets launching satellites. It was quickly resolved by turning the troublesome valves off and back on. But the company has stricter flight rules for astronaut flights, prohibiting valve recycling when a crew is on board.

"And so we stayed with the rules and the procedures, and scrubbed as a result," Bruno said at a press conference.

NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich acknowledged it was a tough call. Within minutes of the countdown halting, Boeing's new astrovan was back at the launch pad to retrieve Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams from their pad at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station.

This would have marked the first human crewed flight for Starliner with Indian origin Sunita "Suni" Williams piloting the craft with fellow NASA pilot Barry "Butch" Wilmore. Boing had designed Starliner to rival the Dragon capsule of Elon Musk's SpaceX. *—PTI*

Rupee settles on flat note at 83.51 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled higher by 1 paisa at 83.51 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid a negative trend in domestic equities and strong dollar demand. Forex traders said elevated significant foreign fund outflows in the international market dented investors' sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.48 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.47 and a low of 83.52 against the greenback. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.51 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa higher than its previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled 7 paise lower at 83.52 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.26, higher by 0.20 per cent. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday. —*PTI*

Gold climbs Rs 200; silver jumps Rs 700

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

Extending gains for second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday climbed by Rs 200 to Rs 72,450 per 10 grams in the national capital in line with firm trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at Rs 72,250 per 10 grams. Silver prices also jumped by Rs 700 to Rs 85,000 per kg. It had settled at Rs 84,300 per kg in the previous session. "Gold moved higher on indications that the US Federal Reserve could cut interest rates this year. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,319 per ounce, up by USD 7 from the previous close. Silver was also marginally up at USD 27.25 per ounce. It had ended at USD 27.05 per ounce in the previous session. —*PTI*

IndiGo orders 30 A350-900 aircraft: Airbus

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Airbus on Monday said IndiGo has placed a firm order for 30 A350-900 planes. On 25 April, IndiGo said it had agreed to place a firm order for 30 A350-900 aircraft, marking the budget carrier's entry into the wide-body segment. "India, the world's fastest growing major aviation market, is on the verge of an international travel boom as the economy grows and household incomes rise," Airbus said in a release. "The A350 is perfectly positioned to serve the country's aspirations for long-range travel," it said. The financial details of the transaction were not disclosed. The A350 is the worlds most modern and efficient wide-body aircraft in the 300-410 seater category, the release added. —*PTI*

LNG futures trading surges amid summer demand

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

In the wake of rising demand and geopolitical tensions, liquefied natural gas (LNG) futures traded volumes experienced a notable surge in April, marking robust activity in anticipation of the summer season Amidst these dynamics, India, a significant player in the LNG market, continues to see an upward trajectory in its LNG imports, driven by various sectors including power, industry, and transportation. According to data from March 2024, India's total LNG imports, including long-term and spot purchases, stood at 1.9 million metric tonnes (MMT), amounting to USD 1113 million. For the fiscal year 2023-24, India's cumulative LNG imports reached 23.3 MMT, valued at 13266 million.. India's ambitions to elevate its LNG import capacity align with its goal to raise the share of natural gas in its energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030. As the summer season approaches, stakeholders will closely monitor LNG market dynamics for further insights into future trends and developments. —*PTI*

IIT study finds most people overspending due to UPI

NPCI launched UPI in 2016 at forefront of digital transformation

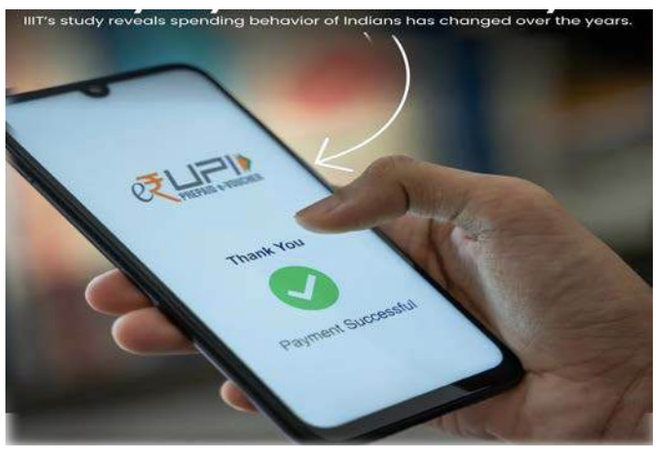
NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

A recent study by IIT-Delhi found that most people reported higher spending owing to UPI. Of the 276 people surveyed, 75 per cent spent more due to UPI while 7 per cent spent less.

The study aimed to understand the influence of UPI on spending behaviour among Indian users.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in 2016. According to data from National Productivity Council (NPC), UPI has 484 banks participating and has facilitated a whopping 10 billion transactions totalling Rs 18.2 lakh crore. In India, UPI accounted for 84 per cent of all digital transactions in 2022, totalling Rs 1 lakh crore.

The majority of users believe they spend more while using UPI, which contrasts with spending habits evolved over millennia when cash was the primary mode of payment. Significantly, 91.5 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their UPI usage. In addition, 95.2 per cent of the people found it convenient to make payments via UPI.



Data reveals 7% spent less using UPI PHOTO: PTI

- UPI has 484 banks participating and has facilitated a whopping 10 billion transactions totalling Rs 18.2 lakh crore. In India, UPI accounted for 84 per cent of all digital transactions in 2022

India, in particular, has emerged as a global leader in digital transactions, accounting for 46 per cent of totalglobal digital transactions in 2022. The study is pivotal and reveals how India's push for a digital economy is potentially reshaping consumer habits and economic dynamics. While UPI simplifies the payment process and may encourage some to spend more, it also enables many Indians to run their businesses more efficiently and save money, demonstrating the complexities of India's digital payment landscape. —*Salar News*

Markets settle lower; Sebi rejects NSE's proposal

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

Equity benchmark indices declined on Tuesday dragged by HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank amid concerns over rich valuation of equities. Paring all its early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex went lower by 383.69 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 73,511.85. During the day, it tanked 636.28 points or 0.86 per cent to 73,259.26.

The NSE Nifty declined 140.20 points or 0.62 per cent to 22,302.50. From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, NTPC, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were among the major laggards.

BSE benchmark edged up 17.39 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 73,895.54 on Monday. The NSE Nifty declined 33.15 points or 0.15 per cent, 22,442.70.

PHOTO: PTI

Sebi rejects NSE's proposal to extend trading hours

Capital markets regulator Sebi has rejected a proposal by the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to extend the trading hours in the equity derivatives segment citing a lack of feedback from the stock broker's community. —*PTI*

GST lowered taxes on essential items: Fin Min

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman shared a post on social media on Monday and highlighted that GST (Goods and Services Tax) has reduced the taxes on many essential items.

The minister said "GST lowered taxes on many essential items compared to pre-GST rates. Common items like hair oil and soaps saw tax cuts from 28 per cent to 18 per cent "She also highlighted the two recent achievements in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) architecture.

She emphasised the GST collection crossing of Rs 2 lakh crore and the appointment of the President of the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) as a significant milestone.

In her post, she also shared about the history of GST by crediting former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee led the NDA government for initiating the idea and credited PM Narendra Modi for its implementation. She also highlighted the complexities of India's pre-GST indirect tax system, emphasising the fragmented market.

"Before GST, India's indirect tax system was fragmented & complicated, and every state was practically a distinct market in itself with different rules and tax rates. Inputs for central excise duty, etc, could not be availed. At the end, the post concluded by adding "GST is an expression of Modi Govt's commitment to'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas'. Our continuous efforts are towards ensuring that new heights are scaled through better taxpayer services and increased efficiencies instead of increased taxes". —*ANI*

JAYPEE GROUP IN CRISIS

Jaiprakash Associates defaults on Rs 4,616 cr loans

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Crisis-hit Jaypee Group's flagship firm Jaiprakash Associates has defaulted on loans worth Rs 4,616 crore, including principal and interest amount.

In a regulatory filing late on Monday, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) has informed that the company on 30 April, defaulted on repayments of a principal amount of Rs 1,751 crore and interest of Rs 2,865 crore.

"Total borrowing (including interest) of the company is Rs 29,805 crore, repayable by 2037, against which only Rs 4,616 crore is overdue as on April 30, 2024," JAL said.

The loans pertained to various banks, and the nature of the obligation is fund-based working capital, non-fund-based working capital, term loans and FCCBs (foreign currency convertible bonds).

PHOTO: PTI

Further, the company said that ICICI Bank had approached the NCLT Allahabad on the direction of the RBI under Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016 against the company. It has contested the move. In September 2018, ICICI Bank filed an insolvency petition against JAL.

SBI had also moved NCLT against JAL, claiming a total default of Rs 6,893.15 crore as of September 15, 2022.

Jaiprakash Associates has been selling its cement plants to reduce debt.

In a case related to its erstwhile subsidiary Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL), Mumbai-based realty firm Suraksha Group had in March 2023 got the approval from NCLT for its bid to acquire JIL and complete around 20,000 apartments in Noida. However, many parties have approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) against the NCLT order. —*PTI*

IRB INFRASTRUCTURE TOLL REVENUE GROWS 29 PER CENT

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

IRB Infrastructure Developers on Tuesday reported a 29 per cent rise in revenue from toll operations to Rs 503 crore during April 2024.

It had earned a revenue of Rs 388 crore from toll collection during the same month last year, the company said in a statement.

The government's focus is on infrastructure development, especially on the roads and highways segment. The company expects that the toll collection momentum will have an upward trend in FY25, he said.

Out of 17 toll assets, IRB MP Expressway in Maharashtra contributed the major share of Rs 140.7 crore to the total revenue collection in April, up from Rs 137.2 crore in April 2023, the company said. —*PTI*

787 INSPECTION DOUBTS

US probes Boeing in new case

UNITED STATES, 7 MAY

The US has opened a new inquiry into troubled jet firm Boeing, after the company told air safety regulators that it might not have properly inspected its 787 Dreamliner planes.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said it would look into whether staff had falsified records.

It said Boeing was re-inspecting all 787 jets on the manufacturing line.

Boeing will be forced to develop an "action plan" to address concerns about planes already in service, it added.

Boeing did not comment.

Internally, the company told staff last week that the "misconduct" had not created an "immediate safety of flight issue".

FAA said that Boeing had come forward "voluntarily" last month to warn that it "may not have completed" inspections required to confirm adequate electrical safeguards where the wings join the main body of certain of its 787 Dreamliners, a large jet often used on international flights.

The inspection will be on manufacturing line PHOTO: PTI

- Boeing's reputation had been damaged a few years ago, when two of its 737 Max planes crashed within five months of each other, claiming lives of 346 passengers and crew

Boeing's reputation had been damaged a few years ago, when two of its 737 Max planes crashed within five months of each other, claiming the lives of 346 passengers and crew. A 737 Max flown by Ethiopian Airlines aircraft crashed shortly after take-off in March, 2019, following a Lion Air crash in October 2018. That led to the then chief executive Dennis Muilenburg being fired.

Boeing has said it is working to reform its corporate culture to encourage people who see problems to speak out, with a "more than 500% increase" in reports from employees since January.

—*BBC News*

HZL BOARD APPROVES INTERIM DIVIDEND OF RS 10/SHARE

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) on Tuesday said its board has approved an interim dividend of Rs 10 per share, amounting to Rs 4,225.32 crore for the ongoing financial year.

Earlier, Hindustan Zinc announced plans to spin off its businesses into separate entities, including zinc and silver, to increase its market capitalisation. The Vedanta group company will continue to engage with the Centre on its proposal to split the company into different entities.

The government, the largest minority shareholder in Hindustan Zinc, owns a 29.54 stake in the company. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India exports non-Basmati white rice to Mauritius

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Central government has permitted exports of 14,000 tonne of non-basmati white rice to Mauritius, an official notification showed.

Notably, the export of non-Basmati white rice was prohibited in July 2023 to check domestic prices and ensure domestic food security. The exports of rice to Mauritius are permitted through National Cooperative Exports Limited, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said in its notification.

While initially amending the rice export policy, DGFT maintained that the export would be allowed based on permission granted by the government to other countries to meet their food security needs and based on the request of their government. West African country Benin is one of the major importers of non-basmati rice from India.

The central government extended the 20 per cent export duty on parboiled rice till 31 March, 2024. India in September 2022 banned the exports of broken rice and imposed a 20 per cent duty on exports of non-Basmati rice, except for parboiled rice amid concerns about low production due to a fall in area under the paddy crop. It later lifted the ban in November. —*ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

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KNIGHT FRANK REPORT

8 cities see increase in ghost malls in 2023

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The number of ghost shopping malls – those with vacancy of more than 40 per cent -- increased to 64 last year from 57 in 2022 across eight major cities as retailers and consumers are preferring premium properties, according to Knight Frank.

Real estate consultant Knight Frank India on Tuesday released a report titled 'Think India Think Retail 2024' capturing the dynamics of shopping centres and high streets across 29 cities.

The consultant found a sharp rise in low-performing retail assets across eight major Tier I cities.

As many as 64 shopping malls with about 13.3 million square feet of gross leasable area have been categorised as 'Ghost Shopping Centre' in 2023.

The loss value is at Rs 6.7 lakh crore PHOTO: PTI

As a result of the rise in ghost shopping centres, Knight Frank estimated the loss of value to be at Rs 6,700 crore or USD 798 million in 2023.

Hyderabad is the only city to record a decline in the ghost shopping centre stock by 19 per cent YoY to 0.9 million sq ft in 2023.

The sharpest rise in ghost shopping centres was recorded in Kolkata (237 per cent YoY), albeit at a lower base.

Despite new addition of 8 new retail centres, the total number of shopping centres reduced to 263 in 2023 as 16 shopping centres were shut down over the last year.

- As many as 64 shopping malls with about 13.3 million square feet of gross leasable area have been categorised as ' Ghost Shopping Centre' in 2023

Underperforming shopping centres were either demolished due to various reasons such as developers undertaking residential or commercial developments, or were permanently closed or auctioned.

The report covers 340 shopping centres and 58 high streets across 29 Indian cities, conducted through primary surveys. —*PTI*

Household savings dip over Rs 9 lakh crore in 3 years

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Net household savings declined sharply by Rs 9 lakh crore to Rs 14.16 lakh crore in three years to 2022-23, according to the latest National Account Statistics 2024 of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The net household savings declined to Rs 17.12 lakh crore in 2021-22 and dipped further to a five-year low of Rs 14.16 lakh crore in 2022-23. The previous low of net household savings was Rs 13.05 lakh crore in 2017-18 which increased to Rs 14.92 lakh crore in 2018-19 and Rs 15.49 lakh crore in 2019-20.

The data showed that the investment in mutual funds almost trebled to Rs 1.79 lakh crore in 2022-23 in three years from Rs 64,084 crore in 2020-21. It was Rs 1.6 lakh crore in 2021-22. The household investment in shares and debentures almost doubled to Rs 2.06 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 1.07 lakh crore in three years from 2020-21. It was Rs 2.14 lakh crore in 2021-22.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Bank advances (loans) to households have also doubled in three years to Rs 11.88 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 6.05 lakh crore in 2020-21.

It was Rs 7.69 lakh crore in 2021-22. Loans to households by financial corporations and non-banking financial corporations increased also fourfold to Rs 3.33 lakh crore in 2022-23 —*PTI*

Inconsistent SRH take on LSG in push for play-offs spot

Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games

HYDERABAD, 7 MAY

Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to move on from their underwhelming batting display when they host Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games with SRH making the top four cut based on a slightly superior net run rate of -0.065 compared to LSG's -0.371.

The Sunrisers find themselves in fierce competition for the top four spots with Kolkata Knight Riders (16), Rajasthan Royals (16), and Chennai Super Kings (12) stationed above them on the points table.

The winner of the duel will leap into the playoff race.

Sunrisers Hyderabad will take on Lucknow today **PHOTO: PTI**

The Pat Cummins-led side has ample talent but has been unable to hold on to a winning run recently. Sunrisers have lost three of their last four matches, mainly because their destructive batting line-up hasn't delivered.

In their last match against Mumbai Indians, in which they lost by seven wickets, they failed to put up a good target on the board, which has been their strong suit this season.

Barring Travis Head, who has been their stand-out performer, the other batters in the side have faced a recent slump.

After displaying his power-hitting ability, young opener Abhishek Sharma has breached the 30-run mark just once in the last four games.

And while SRH head coach Daniel Vettori has conceded that the openers are not expected to do the job all the time, the middle order needs to step up.

The flamboyant Heinrich Klaasen has also been unable to strike the ball consistently and Nitish Reddy too has been patchy.

The bowlers have fared better compared to their batting counterparts. *—PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE 2024

Tyrick Mitchell (center) scored in Crystal Palace's 4-0 thrashing of Manchester United © Adrian DENNIS **PHOTO: AFP**

Palace thrash Man Utd 4-0 to leave Hag's future in doubt

LONDON, 7 MAY

Manchester United are at risk of failing to qualify for Europe next season after a dismal 4-0 thrashing at Crystal Palace left the Red Devils eighth in the Premier League. Michael Olise scored twice, either side of goals from the in-form Jean-Philippe Mateta and Tyrick Mitchell, as the Eagles' resurgence since the appointment of Oliver Glasner as manager continues. The time for a change of boss at Old Trafford could be coming soon as Erik ten Hag fails to arrest a slide in his second season in charge.

"I will keep fighting and I prepared the team in the best way I could. It was not good enough, by far not good enough, so I have to take the responsibility for that," said Ten Hag. United have only been absent from European competition once since the 1989-90 season.

That came after finishing seventh in David Moyes' sole campaign 10 years ago and the Scot was sacked with four games of the season to go.

United have never come lower than seventh in the Premier League era but are staring that possibility in the face with title-chasing Arsenal to come at Old Trafford on Sunday. Ten Hag has routinely cited injury problems as mitigation for his side's struggles. The Dutchman was forced to cobble together a makeshift backline as Casemiro deputized out of position at center-back, alongside 36-year-old Jonny Evans.

Captain Bruno Fernandes was also absent as his proud record of never missing a club game in his career due to injury came to an end.

"All season, we have huge (injury) problems," added Ten Hag. "This is the fourth defeat in 2024, so that's not a lot and every time we had huge problems. Many times, we sort it out, today, we didn't."

But there was little excuse for the lack of fight or quality on show from a United side, whose sole Premier League win in their last seven games came against relegated Sheffield United.

Palace are unbeaten in their last five as former Eintracht Frankfurt boss Glasner's project takes shape.

"First half we didn't play as well as we could but we were very efficient," said Glasner.

"At half-time we made adaptions and the second half was much better. Much better control of the game created more chances and scored nice goals." *—AP*

PHOTO: ANI

Italian Open 2024: Badosa win over Andreeva

PARIS, 7 MAY

Paula Badosa showed signs of her former top-five form during a 6-2, 6-3 victory over 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva in the first round of the Italian Open on Tuesday. Badosa was ranked as high as No. 2 before she missed the second half of last year due to a back injury that has also slowed her this season. She's now No. 126. Badosa jumped out to a 5-1 lead in the first set before a 45-minute rain delay and then picked up where she left off against the 40th-ranked Andreeva, who was the WTA tour's newcomer of the year in 2023. Badosa reached the quarterfinals in Rome last year but that turned out to be her penultimate tournament of the season. *—AP*

India's Kavin Quintal bags top-10 finish

CHENNAI, 7 MAY

Ace Indian rider Kavin Quintal made a stunning debut in the 2024 FIM JuniorGP World Championship with a top-10 finish in the Stk European class in Round 2 at the Circuito do Estoril, outside Lisbon, Portugal. Representing Fifty Motorsport team, Kavin clocked 23:19.001s for the 11 laps, just 34.866s adrift of the winner Adrian Rodriguez of Spain (SF Racing) and just 16.092s off fifth-placed Lorenzo Della Porta (Yamaha GV Racing) the current championship leader and 2019 Moto3 champion.The 18-year-old faced early setbacks as he crashed during out-lap in qualifying and had to start the race from the 30th position on the grid. *—PTI*

Igor Stimac announces second list of 15 probable

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Indian senior men's team head coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday announced his second list of 15 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 preliminary joint qualification round 2 matches against Kuwait and Qatar. The first list of probables was announced on Saturday. The 26 players from the first list will begin training in the Odisha capital on May 10. The 15 players from the second list, including Mumbai City FC and Mohun Bagan SG, who contested the ISL Cup final, will join the camp on 15 May. *—PTI*

'Fatigued' Rohit Sharma needs a break: Clarke

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke does not read much into Rohit Sharma's string of poor scores but suggests that the "fatigued" Indian skipper take a break to freshen up ahead of the T20I World Cup. Rohit, who will lead India in next month's 20-team global showpiece, has four single-digit scores in his last five outings for his franchise Mumbai Indians in the ongoing IPL. The 37-year-old has had a busy season this year with an intense five-Test series preceding the IPL for Mumbai Indians, who are all but eliminated from the race to the playoffs this year. "Rohit, being the wise judge of his performances, will undoubtedly be disappointed, especially considering his strong start. In my view, he might be feeling a bit fatigued as well," Clarke told Star Sports. "A break to freshen up could do wonders for him, but as the Indian captain and a key player for Mumbai Indians, you're not getting a break. He's going to have to find form." *—PTI*

Rohit Sharma and Michael Clarke **PHOTO: PTI**

GUKESH, ARJUN, AND PRAGGNANANDHAA IN WARSAW FOR SUPERBET RAPID AND BLITZ

WARSAW, 7 MAY

Fresh from his historic triumph at the Candidates' tournament, Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh will compete in the Superbet Rapid and Blitz chess tournament which begins here on Wednesday.

A part of the Grand Chess tour, the event will also see GM R Praggnanandhaa in action for the first time since the Candidates while world number seven Erigaise Arjun is the other Indian in the 10-player field for the tournament which will have nine rounds of rapid and 18 rounds of blitz to decide the winner. The tournament favorite is none other than world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway who starts as the top seed. The USD 175000 prize money event has as many as six wild cards in the first of the five events. The tour also has a bonus prize pool of USD 175000 for the top three finishers out of which a UDS 100000 is reserved for the winner.The four players who have signed up for the entire tour are Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, Anish Giri of Holland, and Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan.

D Gukesh **PHOTO: PTI**

All of them will take part in four out of five events out of which two will be classical and the remaining three will be rapid and blitz.Besides Carlsen and Arjun, the other four wild cards have been given to Wei Yi of China, Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland, Vincent Keymer of Germany, and Kirill Shevchenko of Romania.Set to play four out of five events in the tour, Gukesh looks like one of the tour favorites. *—PTI*

Maradona's 1986 WC trophy goes to auction

BRAZIL, 7 MAY

Diego Maradona's Golden Ball trophy won for being named the best player at the 1986 World Cup will be auctioned in France in June, the Aguttes auction house said on Tuesday.

This is the first Golden Ball to go for auction and while the value is still to be confirmed, the auction house expects it to fetch millions on 6 June.

Maradona, who died in 2020, won the award after leading Argentina to a World Cup victory in Mexico, scoring five goals at the finals where he captained his country and played every minute of the tournament.

That tournament is probably best remembered for Maradona's two goals against England in the quarter-finals. Maradona outjumped England keeper Peter Shilton as he thumped in the first goal with a raised fist, which he later dubbed as being scored by the "Hand of God".

Maradona's Golden Ball trophy will be auctioned in France **PHOTO: ANI**

The second was an incredible mazy slalom run from his half when he dribbled past five English outfield players and was voted the "Goal of the Century".

The jersey he wore that day, along with the ball from the match, have both previously been sold at auction.

After his display against England, Maradona went on to score the two goals that defeated Belgium in the semi-final and Argentina won a thrilling final 3-2 against West Germany. *—AP*

UNDER 20 MEN'S NFC

Unbeaten Kerala secure QF spot in Swami Vivekananda Under 20 Men's NFC with win over Haryana **PHOTO: IANS**

Unbeaten Kerala secure quarterfinal spot

NARAINPUR, 7 MAY

Kerala defeated Haryana 2-0 to move into the quarterfinal of Swami Vivekananda Under 20 Men's NFC. The group stage encounter was held at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama ground, here on Tuesday.

The win saw Kerala do a clean sweep of its opponents in Group D as the side won all three games, scoring 11 goals in the process and only conceding one goal during their 3-1 win over Gujarat. It was a brilliant defensive display that stopped the very physical Haryana team from scoring as the game finished 2-0 in favor of Kerala.

A brilliant corner taken by midfielder Akhish Cyril opened the scoring for Kerala in the 22nd minute of the game. The corner was met by P Adil, who rose up and calmly headed the ball into the back of the net. *—PTI*

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY

Kyren Wilson wins maiden snooker world title

LONDON, 7 MAY

World No. 12 Kyren Wilson clinched the world title for the first time after beating qualifier Jak Jones 18-14 in the final of the Snooker World Championship.

Wilson became the 23rd player to lift the World Championship trophy at the Crucible. It's a sixth ranking title for Wilson and first since the 2022 European Masters, and his first Triple Crown success. Banking the top prize of £500,000, he jumps nine places up the rankings to a career-high position of third.

On the other hand, Jones missed out on becoming only the second qualifier, after Terry Griffiths and Shaun Murphy, to lift the trophy. But having appeared in his first ranking final, the £200,000 prize boosts him 30 places to number 14, as he joins the elite top 16 for the first time.

Kyren Wilson clinched the world title for the first time **PHOTO: AFP**

Having won the first seven frames during the opening session on Sunday, Wilson was able to nurse his advantage to the winning post, and although tenacious Jones fought hard, he couldn't narrow the gap to less than three. By coming from 17-11 to 17-14 he created an exciting finish, but it proved too little, too late, world snooker reports.

Wilson's scoring was impressive throughout, making four centuries and eight more breaks over 50. *—AP*

Mohammad Amir back for 'unfinished work' at T20 WC

KARACHI, 7 MAY

Rejuvenated fast bowler Mohammad Amir said he has "unfinished work" at next month's T20 World Cup, 15 years after dazzling as a teenager when Pakistan last lifted the trophy.

The 32-year-old, who was jailed for spot-fixing in 2011, came out of retirement last month and is grateful to have another crack at the World Cup.

"It's a great feeling to be playing for Pakistan again," Amir told AFP by phone from Lahore this week ahead of the tournament in the United States and the West Indies beginning on 2 June.

"I want to complete the unfinished work and, for me, the short-term goal is to win the World Cup."

The young Amir impressed in all formats after breaking into the Pakistan side in 2009 and playing at the T20 World Cup.

Mohammad Amir **PHOTO: ANI**

Within a year he was one of the hottest young talents in cricket, but his precocious career then crashed to an infamous halt in 2010.

Amir was one of three Pakistan players banned from cricket for five years for spot-fixing during a Test match in England after being caught in a newspaper sting. He was later jailed in the UK for six months.

Pakistan captain Salman Butt, who was deemed the ringleader, and fellow quick bowler Mohammad Asif were also banned and the pair were jailed for 30 and 12 months, respectively.

Amir returned after his ban to play for Pakistan in 2016 but announced a shock retirement in December 2020 after poor form kept him from being selected. *—AP*